

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13
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R 061442Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4346
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMCONSUL JERUALEM
USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0127

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG, PLO
SUBJECT: SHAWWAS' REACTION TO EGYPTIAN NEWS STORY OF SADAT
MEETING GAZA STRIP PLO SUPPORTERS

REF: CAIRO 0112

1. IN SEPARATE MEETINGS ON JANUARY 5 WITH GAZA MAYOR RASHED SHAWWA AND GAZA CITY MANAGER ISAM SHAWWA, EMBOFF DISCUSSED WITH THEM THE SUBSTANCE OF REFTEL REGARDING THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT SADAT AND SOME GAZA STRIP PLO SUPPORTERS. MAYOR SHAWWA ASKED EMBOFF WHAT HE THOUGHT THE ARTICLE MEANT, TO WHICH EMBOFF REPLIED THAT PRESIDENT SADAT WAS PROBABLY SEEKING TO BALANCE THE EFFECTS OF HIS WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW BY SAYING SOMETHING MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE PLO. THE MAYOR NODDED, THEN SAID: "THIS ARTICLE) HAS LITTLE WEIGHT; THE EGYPTIANS CAN SAY WHATEVER THEY
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WANT TO, BUT THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY MEAN IT." THE MAYOR THEN SPOKE AT LENGTH AND WITH SOME FEELING ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF EGYPTIAN INTEREST IN GAZA FOR A PERIOD OF YEARS AND COMPARED IT WITH THE INDIRECT BUT PRACTICAL SUPPORT GIVEN BY KING HUSSEIN, WHO HAD ALLOWED GAZA CITRUS TO BE SHIPPED INTO JORDAN (AND ONWARD TO PROFITABLE ARAB AND IRANIAN MARKETS WITH JORDANIAN CERTI-

FICATES OF ORIGIN), AND WHO HAD EVEN ALLOWED GAZANS TO BE ISSUED JORDANIAN PASSPORTS. UNLIKE EGYPTIAN LAISSEZ-PASSERS, THESE REQUIRED NO VISAS FOR TRAVEL TO ARAB COUNTRIES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ARAB LEAGUE I.E., EGYPT) HAD IN 1972 PRESSURED THE KING TO STOP THIS, AND THE FINAL QUOTA OF PASSPORTS HAD RUN OUT A YEAR AGO. ACCORDING TO THE MAYOR, ABOUT FIFTEEN HUNDRED GAZA BUSINESSMEN AND THIRTY-FIVE HUNDRED STUDENTS HAVE JORDANIAN PASSPORTS. (COMMENT: THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE A HIGH FIGURE.) WITHOUT THE JORDANIAN CONNECTION TO HIGH-PRICED CITRUS MARKETS TO THE EAST, THE GAZA ECONOMY WOULD COLLAPSE, SAID THE MAYOR, AND, BY CONTRAST, "EGYPT OFFERS US A PLO GOVERNMENT AND EMPTY TALK."

2. CITY MANAGER ISAM SHAWWA ALSO SAID THAT EGYPT HAD NEVER DONE VERY MUCH FOR GAZA OTHER THAN PROVIDING INEXPENSIVE EDUCATION FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. HE TOLD A COMPLICATED STORY FROM THE LATE SIXTIES INVOLVING HIMSELF, NASSER AND ONCE-FOREIGN MINISTER MAHMOUD RIAD, WHEREIN HE (SHAWWA) HAD NEGOTIATED TO OBTAIN THE PAYMENT OF SALARIES FOR FORMER EGYPTIAN CIVIL SERVANTS IN GAZA. THE SUMS THEN TOTALLED 3.5 MILLION EGYPTIAN POUNDS, AND COULD HAVE BEEN PAID GRADUALLY THROUGH THE SALE OF EGYPTIAN COMMODITIES IN JORDAN AND THE TRANSFER TO GAZA OF JORDANIAN DINARS. NASSER APPROVED THE SCHEME PROPOSED BY SHAWWA, BUT THE EGYPTIANS MADE ONLY ONE SMALL PAYMENT. BESIDES THESE DEBTS, SOME 11.5 MILLION EGYPTIAN POUNDS OWED TO PRIVATE GAZANS SINCE 1967 HAVE NEVER BEEN REPAID, SHAWWA SAID.
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3.COMMENT: THE MAYOR HAD A DETERMINED, SAD AIR ABOUT HIM. HE SPOKE OF HIMSELF AS A MAN WHO HAS TRIED HIS HARDEST AND WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE OVERLOOKED. SPEAKING OF HIS RECENT SURPRISE CALL FOR ELECTIONS (SEPTEL) HE SAID HE BELIEVED HE HAD SOLID SUPPORT AND WOULD WIN EASILY; IF NOT, HE WOULD BE GLAD TO TAKE A REST.
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